

alleges to have necessitated the new ground of rejection, is editorial clarifications of features already inherent in the claim.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,501,893 to Laermer et al. ("Laermer") and U.S. Patent No. 6,846,746 to Rattner et al. ("Rattner")

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-9 and 11-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Laermer in view of Rattner. However, Applicant hereby removes Rattner by perfecting Applicant's claim to foreign priority. For example, Rattner's filing date of May 1, 2002, is after the filing date of FR 02/00032 (January 3, 2002). Applicant submits herewith a certified English translation of FR 02/00032. Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1-9 and 11-15 is now moot.

III. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of Laermer, Rattner and S. Wolf and R.N. Ttauber (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1, pgs. 544-545)

The Examiner has rejected claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Laermer, Rattner and Wolf. However, as set forth above, Applicant has removed the Rattner reference by perfecting the claim to foreign priority. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 10 is now moot.

IV. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of Laermer, Rattner and U.S. Patent No. 6,277,756 to Ohara et al. ("Ohara")

The Examiner has rejected claims 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Laermer, Rattner and Ohara. However, as set forth above, Applicant has removed the Rattner reference by perfecting the claim to foreign priority. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 16 is now moot.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,


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